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TELEGRAM NO 286 OF 27 JANUARY

*ms***HOSTAGES: WASHINGTON RECEPTION**

1. THE HOSTAGES WERE WELCOMED TO WASHINGTON TODAY AND I ATTENDED A RECEPTION AT THE WHITE HOUSE IN THEIR HONOUR. THE OTHER FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES INVITED WERE THE CANADIAN, ALGERIAN, FRG AND SWISS AMBASSADORS.

2. THE HOSTAGES AND THEIR FAMILIES DROVE IN FROM THE AIRPORT IN 16 BUSES THROUGH STREETS THROGGED WITH CHEERING PEOPLE AND BEDECKED WITH FLAGS. ON THE SOUTH LAWN OF THE WHITE HOUSE THERE WAS AN ENORMOUS CROWD TO GREET THEM. ON THE DAIS, APART FROM THE FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES I HAVE JUST MENTIONED, THERE WERE THE PRESIDENT AND MRS REAGAN, THE VICE PRESIDENT AND MRS BUSH, THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MRS HAIG, THE SECRETARY FOR DEFENSE, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY LEADERS IN BOTH HOUSES, MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES AND THE CHIEFS OF STAFF. THERE WAS A LARGE MILITARY CONTINGENT TOGETHER WITH MASSED BANDS. THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED A SPEECH OF WELCOME HOME, THE MAIN POINT OF WHICH, I THINK, WAS HIS WARNING THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT AGAIN TOLERATE THE TAKING OF HOSTAGES.

3. THE PRESIDENT WAS FOLLOWED BY LAINGEN AND HE AND ALL THE OTHER FORMER HOSTAGES WERE GIVEN SPECIAL FLAGS IN PRESENTATION BOXES.

4. AFTER WE HAD ALL SUNG GOD BLESS AMERICA, WE WERE ENTERTAINED TO A RECEPTION IN THE WHITE HOUSE AT WHICH THE PRESIDENT MADE ANOTHER SHORT AND WARM SPEECH, FOLLOWED BY TEA, COCA COLA AND CHOCOLATE CAKES.

5. AT THE RECEPTION I MANAGED TO HAVE A WORD WITH LAINGEN WHO, SAYING THAT IT WAS NOT THE PLACE FOR A SERIOUS CONVERSATION, DID MANAGE TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE TO JOHNNY GRAHAM FOR ALL THAT HE HAD DONE. IN A WORD I HAD WITH ONE OF THE OTHER HOSTAGES, MOORHEAD KENNEDY, WHOSE WIFE HAS BEEN THE LEADER OF THE HOSTAGE FAMILIES, HE SAID ONE OR TWO INTERESTING THINGS: IT HAD BEEN THE GREATEST MISTAKE TO ADMIT THE SHAH WHEN THE US EMBASSY IN TEHRAN HAD BEEN TELLING THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT, WITH REVOLUTION RAMPANT IN TEHRAN, THE ADMISSION OF THE SHAH TO THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE BOUND TO IGNITE THE MOST VIOLENT REACTION, WHICH WAS INDEED WHAT HAPPENED: HE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD NOT KNOWN ABOUT THE FAILED RESCUE RAID UNTIL LONG AFTERWARDS AND THEN ONLY BY MEANS OF A PS TO A LETTER FROM SOME RELIGIOUS MANIAC - ORDINARY CORRESPONDENCE HAD BEEN STOPPED WHEN THEY HAD BEEN EVACUATED FROM TEHRAN FOLLOWING THE RAID. FROM THE WAY HE SPOKE KENNEDY GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE THOUGHT THAT THE RAID WAS A PROFOUND MISTAKE. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BOUND TO HAVE LEAD TO THE DEATH OF

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ALL THE HOSTAGES: THE TROUBLE WAS THAT CARTER HAD BEEN FORCED TO DO IT UNDER PRESSURE OF OPINION THOUGH HIS OWN INSTINCTS CERTAINLY MUST HAVE BEEN PROMPTING HIM THE OTHER WAY: UNTIL THE FAILED RAID, CONDITIONS HAD BEEN GETTING VERY MUCH BETTER FOR THE HOSTAGES AND KENNEDY INDICATED THAT RELEASE WOULD HAVE COME MUCH EARLIER HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE RAID. THE ONLY WAY TO DEAL WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY MOB WAS BY PLAYING FOR TIME AND HUMOURING THEM. I INTERJECTED THAT THIS WAS THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF THE POLICY THAT MANY PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY HAD BEEN RECOMMENDING, INCLUDING IN PARTICULAR KISSINGER. KENNEDY EXPOSTULATED THAT NONE OF THE HOSTAGES AGREED WITH THE TOUGH LINE THEORY BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY INEFFECTIVE TO ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSES.

6. I SHOULD ADD THAT CHRISTOPHER, WHO PLAYED THE MAIN PART ON THE AMERICAN SIDE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS IN ALGERIA, WAS NOT PRESENT AT ANY OF TODAY'S EVENTS, HAVING LEFT FOR CALIFORNIA. BUT NEWSOM OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS TOLD ME HOW ENORMOUSLY GRATEFUL THE STATE DEPARTMENT WERE FOR THE HELP THAT THE BRITISH HAD GIVEN: AND THE BANK OF ENGLAND AND MCMAHON IN PARTICULAR HAD BEEN OF THE GREATEST HELP.

7. I HAVE THE FEELING THAT THE ENORMOUS EFFORT THAT HAS GONE INTO THE WELCOME TO THE HOSTAGES HAS IMPOSED QUITE A STRAIN ON THE NEW ADMINISTRATION BEFORE IT HAS REALLY GOT INTO THE SADDLE. NO HEAD OF PROTOCOL HAS YET BEEN APPOINTED AND THERE IS NO SOCIAL SECRETARY AT THE WHITE HOUSE. ARRANGEMENTS ARE NOT CHAOTIC, BUT I SENSE THAT THE WHITE HOUSE IS REACHING THE LIMITS OF ITS RESOURCES AND I CANNOT SEE HOW IT IS GOING TO GIVE THE WHITE TIE RECEPTION FOR THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS THAT IS DUE THERE TONIGHT WHEN THE 16 BUS-LOADS ARE STILL AT THE WHITE HOUSE AS I TELEGRAPH. AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE SLIGHT DISORDER THAT PREVAILS, I GATHER THAT THE KOREAN HEAD OF STATE, WHO IS DUE HERE VERY SHORTLY, BELIEVING THAT HE IS COMING ON A STATE VISIT, IS NOT NECESSARILY GOING TO BE ENTERTAINED AT THE WHITE HOUSE BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF MAKING ARRANGEMENTS IN TIME: NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS HAS PRODUCED CONSIDERABLE INDIGNATION. IT MAKES ME GLAD THAT WE HAVE A LITTLE TIME IN HAND BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER AND YOU WILL BE COMING HERE.

8. HOWEVER, THE JUBILANT RECEPTION THE HOSTAGES HAVE RECEIVED REFLECTS THE FEELINGS OF THE COUNTRY: A SENSE OF RELIEF AND GRATITUDE, AND A WISH TO RALLY ROUND AND RESPOND TO SOMETHING PATRIOTIC. I FIND MY FOREIGN COLLEAGUES, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO HAVE HAD ACQUAINTANCE WITH PRISONERS OF WAR, FIND THE WHOLE EPISODE, INVOLVING AS IT DOES THE EXUBERANT SEARCH FOR NATIONAL SYMBOLISM, VERY ODD INDEED. ONE CANNOT ALSO FORGET THAT THE WHOLE STORY HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS BONANZA FOR THE MEDIA.

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